

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
IN REGULAR SESSION  
January 8, 2008**

A regular session of the Winchester Common Council was held on Tuesday, January 8, 2008 in the Council Chambers, Rouss City Hall. President Charles Gaynor called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** President Gaynor, Vice President Griffin, Mayor Minor, and Councilors Butler, Clark, Coyne, Helm, Major, and Masters. (9)

**ABSENT:** Vice-Mayor Buettner and Councilor Nelson. (2)

**INVOCATION** – Reverend Mike Mayton, Wesleyan United Methodist Church, pronounced the invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Mayor Minor led councilors and citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Vice-President Griffin moved that the minutes of the December 11, 2007 Regular Meeting be approved as presented. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Coyne and unanimously approved by voice-vote.*

**REPORT OF PRESIDENT**

- Reading of a resolution expressing Council's sorrow at the death of former City of Winchester Mayor Claude B. Smalts, Jr.

Mayor Minor read the resolution and presented it to Bessie Solenberger and Carol Frailey, two of Mr. Smalts' daughters who attended the meeting.

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE TO REMOVE A ZONING PROFFER PERTAINING TO BUILDING USE RESTRICTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH A CONDITIONAL REZONING OF 2 N. CAMERON STREET CONDITIONALLY ZONED CENTRAL BUSINESS, B-1 DISTRICT WITH HISTORIC WINCHESTER, HW. RZ-07-10

*No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:35 p.m.*

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE TO CONVENTIONALLY REZONE A 0.627 ACRE PARCEL OF LAND FROM EDUCATIONAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC USE, EIP DISTRICT TO CENTRAL BUSINESS, B-1 DISTRICT AT 126 NORTH CAMERON STREET. RZ-07-11

*No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:35 p.m.*

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND READOPT; SECTION 11-36 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO INCORPORATE CIVIL PENALTIES

*No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:36 p.m.*

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND READOPT; SECTION 6-8 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE, REGARDING UNSAFE STRUCTURES AND TO INCORPORATE RECENT AMENDMENTS TO STATE CODE

*No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:36 p.m.*

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE ADDING ARTICLE VIII OF CHAPTER 6 SECTION 6-143 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO PERMIT THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR AND CODE OFFICIAL TO ISSUE CIVIL SUMMONSES

*No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:37 p.m.*

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE ADDING SECTION 6-144 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO PROVIDE A UNIFORM SCHEDULE OF CIVIL PENALTIES AND AN APPROVED FORMAT FOR CIVIL SUMMONSES VIOLATIONS OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE AND VIRGINIA PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

*No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:37 p.m.*

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND READOPT SECTION 6-89 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO INCLUDE SUBSECTION (E) CONCERNING THE DESIGNATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL DWELLING UNIT AT 2217 HARRISON STREET AS AN INDIVIDUAL RENTAL INSPECTION DISTRICT

*No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:38 p.m.*

- Public Hearing: A request of Lafayette Plaza LLC for a Conditional Use Permit for 30 multifamily dwellings within an existing structure at 119-129 North Loudoun Street zoned Central Business, B-1 District with Historic Winchester, HW overlay. CU-07-11

R. Hunter Hurt of 509 Prince George Place stated he is the architect for Lafayette Plaza LLC. If Council has any questions in reference to the project, he is here tonight to answer them.

Irvin Shendow of 122 N. Loudoun Street stated he is here to speak on behalf and for the project that is slated for being proposed for the Taylor Hotel. He owns the property directly across from the Taylor Hotel. The primary reason he has come to speak is he hopes there can be some language in whatever is adopted that will allow the timely opening of the alley that leads from the Loudoun Street Mall to the Braddock Street Auto Park and that it be kept open during the duration of the construction. He is for the project. He thinks it is a much needed project for downtown. If Council could address the opening of the alley and keeping it open, he would appreciate it.

Carolyn Duff of 218 South Braddock Street stated she didn't know which of the public hearings addressed her issue so she decided to wait and hoped she would get to speak later. Her concern is she owns property adjacent to a rental property. She has lived there for seven years. She moved downtown from Stonebrook after living there for about fifteen years and just never dealt with trashy issues. She has contacted several members of council and has provided some pictures. For about a year or two, she has been taking pictures of an open dump truck filled with mattresses, chairs, tires, and unsafe things that in her opinion are aesthetically ridiculous. She has called the Zoning Administrator and asked him to look into it and he did. He said a dump truck, as long it is registered and legally licensed, can be parked on the property. She asked what can be done to change that because it does not seem appropriate or fitting in a historic district. She understands City Council is encouraging people to come forward and move downtown. She and her husband took that leap of faith hoping it would be a good move and in most cases it has been. Every morning that she gets up and looks next door she looks at trash. It is just unacceptable. She was told that tonight Council was going to be voting on something that would change that to a civil penalty. From what she understands, it is almost impossible to get people to clean up their property because it is a criminal charge. She doesn't understand the logistics of it but as a homeowner, she knows her investment is lessened and her daily quality of life is compromised. She would like to ask City Council to help her to direct or to know how to get something like that changed. She appreciates those in Council who received her pictures. She had asked they get distributed to all of City Council because if a dump truck can sit on a lawn in the historic district of Winchester, something is just not right. She does not know where to go with it but she wanted to bring forth the concern and would like to ask City Council to consider amending any type of code that would allow someone to park a dump truck and leave it sit on their property for three to four weeks fill with things that should be taken to the dump. Her husband and she have a truck and they take their things to the dump. She would just like to ask City Council to address that wherever it is appropriate and help her to get that rental property at 224 S. Braddock cleaned up and make it safe for the children that live there and perhaps consider that vehicles should not be parked on people's lawns. She would appreciate anything Council can do to help with this situation.

President Gaynor addressed Mrs. Duff and informed her that once Ms. Griffin told him about this last week he has called the individual who owns the property

three times. He doesn't know if he has been out of town or what but we are going to address this. He asked her to give us a few days.

Mrs. Duff stated that one thing she forgot to mention is that in addition to the dump truck, the building contains apartments and there is no city pick up of trash and there is not timely pick up of trash. There are always bags and bags of trash on the property. She does not know if the owner has a contract for trash pick up or not but she has possums walking across her porch railing because of it. Not only is it a health issue, it is unacceptable for a downtown area.

President Gaynor asked her to give the staff a few days.

*With no further citizens to speak, the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:47 p.m.*

## **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

In Chairman Buettner's absence, Assistant City Manager Anne Lewis stated the Finance Committee did not meet in the month of December so there is not a report to present.

## **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Chairman Griffin presented the following:

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE TO REMOVE A ZONING PROFFER PERTAINING TO BUILDING USE RESTRICTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH A CONDITIONAL REZONING OF 2 N. CAMERON STREET CONDITIONALLY ZONED CENTRAL BUSINESS, B-1 DISTRICT WITH HISTORIC WINCHESTER, HW. RZ-07-10

*The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>VOTE</u></b>
Vice-Mayor Buettner	Absent
Councilor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Absent
President Gaynor	Aye
• Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE TO CONVENTIONALLY REZONE A 0.627 ACRE PARCEL OF LAND FROM EDUCATIONAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC USE, EIP DISTRICT TO	

CENTRAL BUSINESS, B-1 DISTRICT AT 126 NORTH CAMERON STREET.  
RZ-07-11

*The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>VOTE</u></b>
Vice-Mayor Buettner	Absent
Councilor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Absent
President Gaynor	Aye

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND READOPT; SECTION 11-36 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO INCORPORATE CIVIL PENALTIES

*The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>VOTE</u></b>
Vice-Mayor Buettner	Absent
Councilor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Absent
President Gaynor	Aye

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND READOPT; SECTION 6-8 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE, REGARDING UNSAFE STRUCTURES AND TO INCORPORATE RECENT AMENDMENTS TO STATE CODE

*The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>VOTE</u></b>
----------------------	--------------------

Vice-Mayor Buettner	Absent
Councilor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Absent
President Gaynor	Aye

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE ADDING ARTICLE VIII OF CHAPTER 6 SECTION 6-143 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO PERMIT THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR AND CODE OFFICIAL TO ISSUE CIVIL SUMMONSES

*The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>VOTE</u></b>
Vice-Mayor Buettner	Absent
Councilor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Absent
President Gaynor	Aye

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE ADDING SECTION 6-144 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO PROVIDE A UNIFORM SCHEDULE OF CIVIL PENALTIES AND AN APPROVED FORMAT FOR CIVIL SUMMONSES VIOLATIONS OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE AND VIRGINIA PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

*The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>VOTE</u></b>
----------------------	--------------------

Vice-Mayor Buettner	Absent
Councilor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Absent
President Gaynor	Aye

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND READOPT SECTION 6-89 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO INCLUDE SUBSECTION (E) CONCERNING THE DESIGNATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL DWELLING UNIT AT 2217 HARRISON STREET AS AN INDIVIDUAL RENTAL INSPECTION DISTRICT

Zoning Administrator Vince Diem stated that his office received this concern some time ago and conducted an inspection. We had found violations that resulted in a 10 month enforcement and repair process. The violations were severe and numerous enough to create a danger to the health, safety and welfare of the occupants and included: no primary comfort heat, lack of smoke detectors, improper sanitary drainage, no sanitary facilities due to lack of maintenance, electrical hazards, rotten window sills and frames, broken windows, exterior doors not weather tight and rotten, damaged roof shingles, deteriorated porch, and interior sanitation issues. The tenants were voluntarily relocated for a short period of time to allow repairs to begin and then returned. At the time of this staff report, the residence was in compliance. However, Senior Codes Compliance Inspector Danny Mowery informed him that while driving past the residence today, they found two more broken windows. Through our enforcement process, we had resolved all of the previous violations. Over \$1,425.00 in civil fines and penalties were imposed on the property owner. It is the recommendation of the Zoning and Inspections Department that although we have reached a level of minimal compliance there is a need to monitor the residence to ensure that this level is maintained and not lost. The inclusion of this dwelling as a rental inspection district will apply the ordinances inspection requirements which are necessary to ensure the dwelling continues to be maintained in accordance with the building code.

*The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>VOTE</u></b>
Vice-Mayor Buettner	Absent
Councilor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Absent
President Gaynor	Aye

- Motion to approve a request of Lafayette Plaza LLC for a Conditional Use Permit for 30 multifamily dwellings within an existing structure at 119-129 North Loudoun Street zoned Central Business, B-1 District with Historic Winchester, HW overlay. CU-07-11

Councilor Coyne asked Mr. Hurt if it is possible the alleyway will be open during construction. Mr. Hurt stated that once the wall is stabilized and removed, the alleyway will remain open.

*The motion was seconded by Councilor Helm then unanimously approved by voice-vote.*

- First Reading, by title: AN ORDINANCE TO CONDITIONALLY REZONE 0.926 ACRES OF LAND AT 401 NORTH CAMERON STREET, 403-415 NORTH CAMERON STREET AND 10 BAKER STREET FROM CENTRAL BUSINESS, B-1 DISTRICT WITH HISTORIC WINCHESTER, HW OVERLAY TO CENTRAL BUSINESS, B-1 DISTRICT WITH HISTORIC WINCHESTER, HW OVERLAY. RZ-07-12
- First Reading, by title: AN ORDINANCE TO REPEAL SECTION 16-25 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE, AND TO AMEND ARTICLES 1, 18, AND 21 OF THE WINCHESTER ZONING ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO THE DEFINITION AND OPEN STORAGE OF INOPERABLE MOTOR VEHICLES, AND CIVIL PENALTIES ASSOCIATED WITH OPEN STORAGE OF INOPERABLE MOTOR VEHICLES. TA-07-07
- First Reading, by title: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ARTICLES 3, 4, 5, 5.1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16.1 AND 18 OF THE WINCHESTER ZONING ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO TIME-SHARED OFF-STREET PARKING. TA-07-09
- Motion to approve a resolution in support of the Designation of a Driving Route entitled the Wilderness Road: Virginia's Heritage Migration Route from Winchester to Cumberland Gap.



*The motion was seconded by Councilor Major then unanimously approved by voice-vote.*

## **PUBLIC SERVICES**

Chairman Helm presented the following:

- Chairman Helm stated he did not have a report to present.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Chairman Butler presented the following:

- Jason Hardt was hired as the new gang task force member.
- Applicant testing for the three new police officers approved by Council last month will be held on Friday.
- The death sentence for Edward Bell upheld in the appeals court for the shooting death of Winchester Police Officer Ricky Timbrook.

## **HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE**

Chairman Coyne presented the following:

- Announce the term expiration of Jane Troup as a member of the Social Services Advisory Board effective March 31, 2008, and direct the Clerk of Council to advertise the vacancy. Ms. Troup is eligible for reappointment.
- Chairman Coyne asked that the vacancies for the Northern Shenandoah Valley Disability Services Board, the Park and Recreation Board, and the College Board of Lord Fairfax Community College be advertised.
- The HEW Committee was given the opportunity to tour the renovations at Handley High School. Chairman Coyne stated the progress is remarkable. An Open House is scheduled for February 23, 2008.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mayor Minor gave the 2007 annual report, a copy of which is attached.

President Gaynor motioned to convene in executive session for the purpose of:

1. Consultation with Legal Counsel concerning legal advice on ongoing construction projects and other contractual issues, FOIA matters, the acquisition of real estate, and potential litigation; and

2. Discussion of a prospective business locating in the City where no prior announcement concerning the location to the community has been made.

*The motion was seconded by Mayor Minor then unanimously approved by a voice-vote.*

Upon returning, committee members approved a motion to return to open meeting and each member certified that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were discussed during the closed meeting, and that only those public business matters identified in the motion which convened the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered during the closed meeting.

*A roll call vote was taken, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:*

MEMBER	VOTE
Vice-Mayor Buettner	Aye
Councilor Butler	Absent
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Coyne	Aye
Vice-President Griffin	Aye
Councilor Helm	Aye
Councilor Major	Aye
Councilor Masters	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Nelson	Aye
President Gaynor	Absent

President Gaynor motioned to allocate \$50,000.00 to the E.D.A. for use in the Governors Opportunity Fund. *The motion was seconded by Vice-President Griffin then unanimously approved by voice-vote.*

**ADJOURNMENT** – With no further business to discuss, Vice-President Griffin moved that the meeting adjourn. *The motion was seconded by Mayor Minor then unanimously approved by a voice-vote.*

---

Kari J. Van Diest  
Deputy Clerk of the Common Council

## MAYOR'S REPORT

January 2008

It's hard to believe that 2007 has come to a close! It has been an exceptionally challenging yet rewarding year for the City and I would like to take a few minutes to reflect on our activities over the past year.

First, during 2007, Council received a letter of resignation from 21 year veteran City Manager Ed Daley. He left for a similar post in Hopewell on July 1. We wish him and his wife Karen all the best in his future endeavors.

Immediately, Council President Charley Gaynor accepted the interim position as the City moved forward with recruitment for the position. I am pleased to announce that our new City Manager Brannon Godfrey joins our team next Monday. He was selected following a nationwide search of more than 50 candidates. I would like to send my personal warm welcome to Brannon, his wife Leslie and sons Collier and Harrison.

Tonight marks the last council meeting where Charley is serving in his dual role as Council President and Interim City Manager. He has done a wonderful job as city manager and, in his honor, we will proudly display this plaque in council chambers to recognize his service. On behalf of Council, thank you, Charley, for serving as city manager during this transition time. We couldn't have done it without you!

While it certainly does not feel like winter today, we did experience our first snow and ice of the season in December and congratulate our Snow Removal Team for the great job in clearing the streets. Year round, our Refuse and Recycling Team has increased its recycling collection to 33%, exceeding the state average of 25%. We applaud our citizens for their efforts to recycle, helping to reduce the amount of solid wastes taken to the landfill.

For the 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row, the City was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association for its FY 2006 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. We congratulate our Finance Team!

The City's financial health remains good. We have developed a financial model to determine the impact of schools and other projects on the City's finances. We are very pleased that both Moody's and Standard and Poor's rating agencies reaffirmed the City's AA bond status this past year. Bonds were issued in September for the final City phase of the Handley High School project and the Senior Center project.

2007 has been an extremely active period for the Department of Emergency Management through its efforts to continue the coordination of the National Incident Management System as required by Presidential Directive #5. We are working hard to prepare for any level of disaster

in our community, conducting numerous mock disaster drills, and purchasing the City Watch system, a reverse 911 technology which is needed for mass communications.

The city also saw transition in the leadership at the Police Department. City Manager Gaynor accepted the resignation of Eric Varnau after serving nearly 3 years as Chief and 13 years with the department. Assistant City Manager Craig Smith is serving as Interim Police Chief while Major David White attends training at the FBI Academy in Quantico.

Our Volunteers in Policing volunteered approximately 1200 hours to our agency in 2007 which saved us approximately \$22,500 in employee salary. Part of their work centered on helping with child safety fingerprinting over 620 children.

The Emergency Communications Center answered 214,284 calls last year – that is more than 587 in 24 hours or 24 calls per hour. Of this, 21,342 were 9-1-1 emergencies. This takes special dedication from staff and for this we are very grateful. Someone is always there to answer our emergency.

The Fire and Rescue Department responded to 5574 incidents this year (down from 102 in 2006). There were 56 structure fires resulting in \$450,700 in property loss. Fortunately, this too is a decrease from last year's total of \$1.5 million. I am also pleased to report that that while in the field, our personnel were able to successfully perform cardiac resuscitation 19% of the time while the national success rate is 6%. We were called to respond to our neighbors in Frederick County through mutual aid on 471 calls. And finally, we're pleased that Friendship and South End Volunteer Fire & Rescue Stations placed two new Medic/Ambulances in-service.

Our Fee for Emergency Medical Transport Program completed its first full year and has been very successful. We were able to hire six additional Firefighter/EMS responders, start and fund a Recruitment and Retention Program, as well as increase funds to assist volunteer stations this year by a total of \$170,000. Total collections for the first full year of our program is \$722,674 at this time.

The Housing and Neighborhood Development and Fire and Rescue Departments are installing carbon monoxide detectors free of charge to city residents. 250 Carbon Monoxide Detectors were awarded to the city from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

In addition, Housing, Social Services, and Fire and Rescue coordinated the Annual Heater Drive again this year. Thanks to the generosity of local faith based groups and certain private citizens, Social Services and Housing have distributed new electric heaters to over 100 city households and provided cash assistance to an additional 14 families who needed to re-connect utilities or meet the minimum delivery amounts for home heating oil.

Efforts to update the City's Comprehensive Plan began in earnest in 2007. In addition to the Planning Commission holding special worksessions, a staff-level team met weekly to develop and begin tasks outlined in a Plan of Action. Numerous studies are underway by staff and responses have been received from consultant firms wishing to assist the City with the Plan. Also, a statistically valid citizen satisfaction survey is being conducted. Facilitated worksessions will be scheduled in early 2008 in various areas of the City to obtain citizen input.

The Planning Commission and Planning Department were busy reviewing development proposals this past year. In addition to preparing numerous Zoning text amendments to ease development standards such as those for Corridor Enhancement and Shared Parking, there were 66 site plans filed last year (as compared to 57 in 2006) and 14 rezoning applications filed (as compared to 4 in 2006). Conditional Use Permits were also up from 7 in 2006 to 13 requests in 2007.

Within the past year, additional efforts have been made in resolving the overcrowding concerns in the City's residential neighborhoods. The number of complaints received has decreased and the percentage of violations abated among closed cases has increased.

During 2007, the city worked diligently to explore the feasibility of relocating Social Services which has outgrown the aging office building it occupies on Boscawen Street. Former City Manager Ed Daley worked with community partners and others to promote the Department's co-location with other service providers at the Our Health Campus. When completed, the project will rehabilitate over 30,000 square feet of vacant property, and contribute significantly to the revitalization of North Cameron Street.

The Administration Department completed a comprehensive evaluation of the City's pay plan and prepared recommendations for Council review. We are working hard to make the necessary changes to maintain competitive recruiting efforts and retain the dedicated and knowledgeable staff we have working for the city.

It has truly been a year of giving on the part of city employees through various drives:

- 200+ pounds of food for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank;
- Over 73 pints of blood for the American Red Cross;
- Contributions to the United Way Campaign exceeding \$8000.00;
- Several blankets for the 4th Annual Community Blanket Drive;
- Sore muscles, hours of practice, and over \$2500 to the Annual Kickball Tournament and WINC Chain of Checks;
- Toothbrushes, food, games, and so much more for Operation Noble Cause for Soldiers;
- Hours of bell-ringing for the Salvation Army in chilly temperatures;
- Numerous Christmas gifts for 22 families adopted through the Salvation Army Angel Tree;
- Sweat and labor by more than 30 employees and Council members for the United Way Day of Caring;

And finally, 52 families with a total of 127 children were the recipients of this year's Timbrook Food and Toy Drive. The boxes of food and toys were delivered to the homes on December 8, in plenty of time for Christmas.

New playground equipment was installed earlier this fall at Douglass Park. Bad weather in December postponed improvements including a new asphalt trail, accessible drinking fountain, landscaping (lots of new trees), and improvements to the basketball court and the baseball infield. There will also be new picnic tables, benches, and grills. Funding is coming from the Parks and Recreation Department and a community development block grant. Many children will enjoy this park in the spring!

Upon visiting Jim Barnett Park, you will notice the continued upgrades to the War Memorial Building with the renovation of the fitness room. The work included the replacement of fitness equipment, new fixtures, televisions, new doors and windows, and a new drop ceiling. In addition, the park was able to upgrade many of its gravel parking lots to asphalt-surfaced lots.

Improvements to the city's infrastructure were a high priority in 2007. Corridors on all sides of the city saw improvements. The Valley Avenue Widening project was completed and I believe it allows for much more efficient travel down this road. The traffic signalization project on Pleasant Valley Road eases congestion for a much better flow of traffic. And pedestrians have a much easier time navigating our sidewalks. In fact, some pedestrians may even have a "bounce to their step" with the addition of rubber sidewalks in some Winchester locations. The city is trying out this material because tree roots do not damage rubber like it does concrete. Most recently, the entire National Avenue sidewalk from Pleasant Valley Road to East Lane were replaced with concrete on both sides.

Infrastructure improvements will continue to be a priority of the city as we continue to replace pipeline for our water and wastewater systems, begin the design work for upgrades at both plants for increased capacities, and implement the 5-year streets repaving plan.

2007 was an exciting year for tourism. While welcoming over 17,000 visitors during the year, much of the staff and tourism board's efforts were concentrated on the new Visitor Center and Civil War Orientation Center. This project entailed exhibit and graphic design meetings and planning, along with selection of brochure display racks and multi media units. The overall success of the project has entailed working closely with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and Shenandoah University.

The first City calendar was printed in December. We're proud of this publication that can serve as a resource for our citizens. If you have not received a copy and would like one please stop by City Hall.

I would like to wish everyone a safe, healthy, and happy new year. Please continue to pray for the safety of our troops all around the world who are defending our freedom.

City Council and staff will be busy in 2008. We look forward to a productive year and encourage your continued participation in your city government.